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Queer Theory meets HRD Research and Practice

Nick Rumens

Introduction

In this chapter I aim to contribute to the theorisation of human resource development (HRD) research and practice through the lens of queer theory. Here, I add to a diverse critical HRD (CHRD) scholarship that offers a tart corrective to dominant HRD discourse and knowledge that accentuates short-term productivity gains and profit, develops employees as organisational resources and fosters a slavish commitment to shareholders (Bierema, 2009). As a counterpoising paradigm, CHRD has engendered scholarly debate about power relations within HRD research and practice, exposing inequalities and addressing issues of organisational and social (in)justice (Githens, 2015). One strand of debate focuses on how identities shape and are shaped by HRD approaches to individual and organisational learning and development. Scholarly research in this area has extended the boundaries of the HRD field by, for example, incorporating gender, race, ethnicity and sexuality into research on how HRD (in)advertently marginalises, ignores and constrains the expression of identities, selves and subjectivities (Alfred & Chlup, 2010; Bierema, 2002; Collins, McFadden, Rocco & Mathis, 2015; Plakhotnik, Rocco, Collins & Landorf, 2015). Indeed, CHRD has addressed what Bierema and Cseh (2003) call “undiscussable” topics such as “sexism, racism, patriarchy, and violence”, which despite receiving scant coverage within mainstream HRD are, nonetheless, issues that have

“considerable impact on organisational dynamics” (pp. 23-24). Significantly, CHRD has permitted scholars to galvanise critical theories including queer theory in the ongoing project of examining how HRD research and practice reproduces inequalities that marginalise and exclude lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender (LGBT) and queer subjects (Chapman & Gedro, 2009; Collins, 2012; Gedro, 2010; Gedro & Mizzi, 2014). Still, HRD scholarship that engages with queer theory is limited and yet, as Gedro (2010) avers, it harbours enormous potential to both question the normative ontologies that dominate the field and inspire alternative ways of enacting HRD that take into account questions of power, privilege and identity.

Realising this potential, I mobilise queer theory to enable HRD scholars and practitioners to move beyond treating identity as a binaried, bounded and stable category. From a queer theory perspective, identity categories are not discrete repositories into which people can be neatly slotted, even if they might be posited as such. One animating impulse of queer theory is to destabilise identity categories, showing how they are performative, unbounded and susceptible to alteration, sometimes with subversive effects (Butler, 1990, 1993, 2004). Historically, queer theory research has largely but not exclusively focused on LGBT sexualities, typically with an emphasis placed on how social norms curtail the possibilities for living sexual identities *queerly*, beyond binary formations (e.g. heterosexual/homosexual; male/female) that are embedded in our everyday lives (Doty, 1993; Edelman, 2004; Halperin, 1995; Sedgwick, 1990; Warner, 1993). It is LGBT sexual and gender identities that form the central concern of this chapter, with good reason. HRD has an impoverished history of recognising and addressing LGBT workplace issues, let alone studying the particulars of LGBT identities, despite exhibiting an interest in minority groups (Collins, 2012). Even when HRD scholars have organised events to discuss LGBT workplace issues, resistance has been encountered within the academic HRD community

about its importance and salience (Schmidt & Githens, 2010). Other researchers have highlighted the poor coverage of LGBT issues within HRD curricula (Chapman & Gedro, 2009; Gedro, 2010) and HRD scholarship (McFadden, 2015; Schmidt, Githens, Rocco & Kormanik, 2012), suggesting that HRD is complicit in contributing to the ongoing exclusion and marginalisation of LGBT people. Yet there is a growing consensus among a cabal of CHRD scholars that knowledge on LGBT identities must be advanced if HRD scholarship and practice is to become more inclusive (Collins, 2012; Gedro & Mizzi, 2014; McFadden, 2015). With this in mind, this chapter begins by outlining queer theory and a notion of queering, both of which inform the type of critical lens I advocate for HRD scholars. Next, I consider extant queer developments within HRD scholarship before exploring how queer theory perspectives on LGBT identity have produced an array of insights that are potentially invaluable for HRD scholars and practitioners. I conclude by discussing the implications for developing future HRD practice queerly.

Queer theory and queering

Queer theory has a rich heritage in the humanities ever since it was first coined by feminist Teresa de Lauretis in the introduction to the published proceedings of a 1990 conference, 'Queer Theory: Lesbian and Gay Sexualities,' convened in the US at the University of California. Since its debut on the academic conference scene, queer theory has been rapidly appropriated by humanities and cultural studies scholars, and more recently by social scientists, as a theoretical lens for reading signs of queerness: the narratives, identities, relationships, images, discourses and texts that can be read as 'queer' – as something at odds with cultural and social regimes of normativity (see Doty, 1993; Edelman, 2004; Halperin, 1995, 2003; Sedgwick, 1990; Warner,

1993). In this way, Case (1991, p. 3) argues that queer theory “works not at the site of gender [and sexuality], but at the site of ontology, to shift the ground of being itself”. Queer theory turns our attention toward, and then problematises, humanist ontologies that essentialise sexuality and gender, for example, within binaries such as heterosexual/homosexual, male/female, and masculine/feminine. As Doty (1993) explains, queer theory seeks to “challenge and break apart conventional categories” (p. xv). From these insights, a sense emerges of how queer theory enables us to examine how ontologies operate as “normative injunctions”, setting the “prescriptive requirements” whereby, for instance, bodies are constituted as culturally ineligible in terms of sex and gender (Butler, 1990, p. 148). In that respect, some scholars understand queer theory as a “positionality vis-à-vis the normative / normal” (Halperin, 1995, p. 113). Advancing this view, Halperin writes, “Queer is by definition whatever is at odds with the normal, the legitimate, the dominant. *There is nothing in particular to which it necessarily refers*” (1995, p. 62, emphasis in original). Indeed, queer theory actively resists precise definition, not least because some queer theorists opine that reducing it to a fixed set of precepts and ideas will impair its “magical power to usher in a new age of sexual radicalism and fluid gender possibilities” (Halperin, 2003, p. 339). As such, queer theory does not offer a system of ideas used to explain something; instead, one of the motors of queer theory is a notion of antinormativity that “undermines norms, challenges normativity and interrupt[s] the processes of normalisation” (Wiegman & Wilson, 2015, p. 4). In this regard, queer theory is usefully approached not by asking what it is but by what can it *do*?

Early renditions of queer theory tried to usher in queer as an inclusive identity label to cover all manner of individuals who feel excluded by social norms relating to sexuality and gender. While it is important to recognise subjects who identify as “queer” (and this may include

‘straight queers’, see Thomas, 2000), I do not regard queer as a fixed identity. This is one reason why I am reluctant to add a Q to the LGBT acronym used throughout this chapter, which I deploy as a convenient shorthand and nothing more. Primarily, I engage with queer as a verb, *to queer*; whereby HRD scholars can draw on the assemblage of competing ideas, theories, themes and political strategies that have crystallised from queer theory’s intellectual ancestry in radical feminism, gay and lesbian studies and poststructuralism. In so doing, they may engage in a process of *queering*, a term coined by queer theorists to refer to strategies of reading that go against the grain of heteronormative culture, in order to seek out new ways of becoming (e.g. in terms of identity, subjectivity, relating) and cast light on alternative discursive arrangements of power and knowledge (Seidman, 1997). Heteronormativity often figures centrally in queer theory research as an analytical category for understanding how heterosexuality is ascribed a “normal” and “natural” status, predicated on a set of assumptions that there are only two sexual categories (e.g. heterosexuality/homosexuality) (Warner, 1993). Queering then, as McRuer (1997) intones, represents “a critical perversion that continuously forges unexpected alliances and gives voice to identities our heteronormative culture would like to, and cannot, silence” (p. 5). Queering may be understood as a discursive strategy that aims to deconstruct heteronormativity, often by re-reading culture in ways that expose and problematise its normative logics. Also, queering functions to prise open new possibilities for reconstituting such things as identities, selves, relationships, subjectivities, intimacies and political practices (Seidman, 1997). However, it is not a process that aims to replace one normative regime with another, but to hold open to interrogation the norms and assumptions that we take-for-granted in everyday life. Crucially, queering is neither universalistic in the form it takes nor uniform in how it is practiced. For the purposes of this chapter, I advocate queering as a tactic and set of

practices for scholars to challenge HRD discourses that categorise and normalise identities in binary formations. Queering seeks to destabilise binaries, to unearth fault lines along the boundaries that demarcate systems of classification into which individuals, sexualities, genders, identities and desires are inserted. Already inspired by queer theory and the notion of queering, some HRD scholars have mobilised queer concepts and tactics within the field of HRD.

Queer developments with HRD research

As is the case in management and organisation studies more widely (Rumens, 2013, 2016), queer theory has made some inroads into HRD research and practice but it remains peripheral and underutilised as a critical lens. CHRD scholars who have rallied queer theory have focused on a number of issues: how HRD curricula ignores LGBT sexualities (Chapman & Gedro, 2009); how HRD scholarship struggles to account for LGBT identities (Collins, 2012); and how queer theory might develop more inclusive forms of HRD research and practice (Gedro & Mizzi, 2014; Gedro, 2010). Together, this emergent body of research provides insights into a number of problems that currently plague the HRD field.

The first problem concerns the apparent reluctance among HRD scholars to address issues of diversity, power and inequality across the field more generally. As Alfred and Chlup (2010, p. 332) argue, “although HRD professes an interest in diversity, it has not seriously made it a part of the curriculum”. For example, reviewing the HRD literature on LGBT workplace issues, McFadden (2015, p. 3) notes that “sexual and gender identity” is “largely ignored in existing HRD research” and concludes that “there is still more to study, more to learn, and more to do” (p. 28). Attempts at introducing LGBT issues into HRD academic debates have

encountered opposition. For example, Schmidt and Githens (2010) faced resistance after proposing to organise a pre-conference on LGBT workplace issues involving students, scholars and practitioners for the 2008 Academy of Human Resource Development (AHRD) International Research Conference. Some reviewers of the proposal “wondered if this topic was one that AHRD wanted to promote that particular year”, while others “questioned its importance to conference attendees” (Schmidt & Githens, 2010, p. 59). Although the proposal was accepted, the specific topic was still an issue. Schmidt and Githens were “strongly encouraged to expand the session’s focus to cover a broad range of workforce diversity topics and not focus on LGBT issues” (p. 59). This outcome is disappointing. When LGBT issues are subsumed under a wider diversity remit this sends a signal across the HRD field that LGBT sexualities are not important enough to be considered in their own right, an outcome of which might be that LGBT workplace issues are not taken seriously.

The second problem concerns the level of organisational resistance to HRD initiatives that advance LGBT workplace equality. Hill’s (2009, p. 42) analysis of organisational “blowback” (the internal refusal to accept LGBT-related changes and is an unintended consequence that results when non-discrimination policies are operationalised) is illuminating. Hill (2009) reasons that blowback may arise when there is a perceived threat of entitlement by majority groups (e.g. white, heterosexual, male, and middle-class) based on a heteronormative presumption that heterosexuality is both natural and incontestable. Thus, initiatives to provide equal treatment to LGBT employees (e.g. domestic partner benefits, legal protection from employment discrimination) are interpreted as “special rights”, instances of “preferential treatment” and as indicators that LGBT people are claiming majority groups’ rights. Religious intolerance, heteronormative stereotyping (e.g. gay men are hyper feminine and lesbians are

hyper masculine) and government and politician-sponsored antigay speech that seeks to curtail the freedoms of LGBT people may also condition blowback. Mitigating the impact of blowback is possible, as Hill (2009) contends, but it requires courage and leadership from HRD researchers and practitioners who are knowledgeable about the issues affecting LGBT employees.

The third problem concerns the paucity of content and coverage on LGBT sexualities across the HRD curricula. Chapman and Gedro (2009) elaborate, demonstrating how the heteronormativity of the HRD curricula and pedagogical practices in the HRD classroom can treat LGBT identities cursorily in one off lectures and seminars on diversity management, or ignore them altogether. A related issue seldom commented upon is how cisnormativity also colours the HRD curriculum. Established in the work of Bauer et al. (2009, p. 356), cisnormativity “describes the expectation that all people are cissexual, that those assigned male at birth always grow up to be men and those assigned female at birth always grow up to be women. This assumption is so pervasive that it otherwise has not yet been named”. Indeed, Collins et al. (2015) point out that much HRD scholarship on LGBT people primarily focuses on sexual orientation, leaving cisnormative assumptions about sex and gender unchallenged. Without a critical awareness about cisnormativity, HRD researchers (in)directly contribute to the ongoing marginalisation and exclusion of transgender subjects within the field.

The deep rootedness of these problems is not to be underestimated, but nascent queer developments within HRD give us grounds to be optimistic that progress can be made, even if it is tortuously slow. For example, Chapman and Gedro (2009) advocate queering the HRD curriculum, which they read as an “act of breaking apart predictable associations of sexuality and its representations” (p. 97). They suggest how queering the HRD curriculum might entail, for example, creating safer spaces for LGBT issues to be heard, generating new content and

knowledge on LGBT issues in order to problematise current HRD epistemologies that imply knowledge is value-free and that standpoints can be neutral and objective. In this way, queering the HRD curriculum draws on queer theory's critique of what is normal and its impulse *to queer* theory to open up alternative non-normative viewpoints (Warner, 1993). Gedro (2010) makes a similar argument, citing queer theory as a conceptual resource that "questions the instrumentalist epistemology of HRD" as well as nourishing possibilities for alternative "insights into ways to facilitate individual and organizational learning because it questions relations of power, privilege, and identity" (p. 355). Gedro and Mizzi (2014) proselytise their ideas on queer theory, and currently offer the most substantial case for adopting queer theory within the field of HRD, alongside feminist theories. They reason that queer theory can act as a catalyst for change, not just by exposing harmful instances of heteronormativity within HRD research and practice, but also in how queer theory encourages us to think about non-normative alternatives. Here, then, Gedro and Mizzi (2014, p. 454) use queer theory and feminist theory in tandem to help HRD scholars and practitioners identify "spaces where categories are at play in an organization and where they reify classism, racism, sexism, heterosexism, or any other 'ism' that is inevitably limiting". In other words, queer theory has a role to play in helping to expose and sustain signs of queerness within the HRD field, such as those instances where the complexities of human differences in all their multiplicity cannot or refused to be contained within binaried and bounded identity categories. Building on existing queer developments within HRD, I turn now to consider how queer theory has been used to queer identity categories, outlining insights for HRD scholars.

Queering LGBT identity categories

Queer theory can foster a critical awareness among HRD scholars about the pitfalls of falling back into thinking that people who belong to specific identity categories automatically share certain things in common. Such assumptions have often been made with regard to LGBT persons, such as shared experiences of oppression when in reality there are important differences. As stated above, transgender subjects may experience the oppressive effects of cisnormativity in ways that some cisgender gay men and lesbians do not. Furthermore, there are importance differences *within* identity categories. For instance, not all gay men are the same, and experiences of negotiating workplace heteronormativity are shaped by how gay men are located in terms of class, race, ethnicity or, as studies show, in terms of age (Riach, Rumens & Tyler, 2014; Willis, 2012). Yet the idea that collective identity categories are authentic because they bind people together through experiences such as shared oppression remains popular in some quarters (Richardson & Monro, 2012). This mode of thinking was at its height during the 1970s and 1980s when LGBT identity was often conceptualised using a minority model of community, one that imbues into identity categories a sense of coherence and stability (Seidman, 1997). The minority model of identity assumes that identity categories can be easily singled out and differentiated and, on this basis, holds political expediency as identity categories can be used as muster stations around which LGBT people can organise politically to secure equality rights (Richardson & Monro, 2012). Yet, queer theorists have been at pains to point out that shared similarities around sexual identity categories may be ephemeral, partial, fluid and alienating. Sometimes labelled “anti-identity”, queer theory cautions us to be wary of ontologies of human difference that essentialise identity categories on the premise that LGBT identities are only “authentic” or “real” if they possess certain characteristics (Gamson, 1995).

Queer theory's conceptualisation of identity categories as unbounded and performative can furnish HRD scholars with deeper insights into how LGBT identities interrelate with others. Regarding the unbounded quality of identity categories, Anzaldúa (1991) asserts that identity "is not a bunch of little cubby holes stuffed respectively with intellect, sex, race, class, vocation, gender. Identity flows between, over, aspects of a person" (1991, pp. 252-253). Acknowledging this is to recognise that queering identity involves a reconsideration of the boundaries and workings of identity categories and how they connect with each other. As Anzaldúa (1991) and other queer theorists note (Butler, 1990; Muñoz, 1999), identity categories can become highly contested discursive sites when they are interwoven; reason enough for HRD scholars to explore, for instance, how LGBT identities are not mediated strictly through the intersection of gender, sexuality and sex. If HRD is serious about developing LGBT-inclusive practices beyond rhetorical exhortations (Alfred & Chlup, 2010), scholars must examine how LGBT identities bleed into others. The challenge facing HRD scholars then is not to conceptualise identity differences by relying on an additive model. The "additive model" of identities, described by Sullivan (2003), is one in which identities are discrete bases that sit alongside each other, allowing subjects to described themselves as, for example, "a disabled, indigenous, working-class, lesbian mother" (p. 71). For Sullivan, this logic can lead to the conclusion that such an individual is oppressed five times over, and is necessarily more oppressed than a white, working-class, lesbian mother. It involves a "positing of hierarchies of oppression without recognising that the implications of being positioned in one of the above ways are significantly different from being positioned in another" (Sullivan, 2003, p. 72). Sullivan's queer theory critique of the additive model serves as a launch pad for rethinking queerly how identities intersect. However, even the concept of intersectionality, often used to describe how multiple identities define and

are defined by each other (Ward, 2008), implies that identities intersect at fixed points. Through a queer lens, HRD scholars may rupture a conception of intersectionality as systems of interlocking differences, examining how LGBT subjects may perform multiple identities in ways that are unpredictable, fluid and disruptive. Here, HRD scholars might investigate instances of “disidentification”, a term used by Muñoz (1999) to advocate a politics of “disidentification” that works against dominant discourses that tether subjects to fixed identity categories, in favour of identity acts that, for example, utilise camp to parody and denaturalise normative constructions of LGBT identities. HRD scholars might explore the possibilities for disidentifications among LGBT subjects to expose how the discursive texture of identity categories is open to contestation and alteration.

Similarly, the queer concept of identity as performative, articulated in Butler’s (1990, 1999, 1993, 2004) ground-breaking work on gender performativity, holds enormous potential for HRD scholars. Drawing on J. L. Austin’s (1962) theory of speech acts, gender performativity is premised on Butler’s conviction that gender is a corporeal style, an act as it were, which “is both intentional and performative, where ‘performative’ suggests a dramatic and contingent construction of meaning” (Butler, 1999, p. 177). Importantly, for Butler, performativity “cannot be understood outside of a process of iterability, a regularized and constrained repetition of norms. And this repetition is not performed *by* a subject; this repetition is what enables a subject and constitutes the temporal condition for the subject” (p. 95, emphasis in original). Butler (1993) emphasises that subject positions are continually evoked through stylised acts of repetition, and it is through acts of repetition that gender becomes ritualised, the effects of which make it appear natural. In this frame, terms of “gender designation are thus never settled once and for all but are constantly in the process of being remade” (Butler, 2004, p. 10). As such,

Butler (1993) argues that performativity is not reducible to the notion of performance because the latter presupposes the existence of a performer or subject, while performativity contests the notion of a preformed subject. Thus gender is performative because it is the *effect* of a regularised repetition of norms that may both enable and constrain how lives can be lived.

Mobilising Butler's performative ontology of gender, HRD scholars might examine how LGBT identity categories are unstable and in a constant process of being remade. Conceptualising identity as performative could yield insights into how subjects may challenge the discourses that reproduce binaries such as heterosexual/homosexual and masculine/feminine. As Butler writes, "The reiterative speech act ... offers the possibility — though not the necessity — of depriving the past of the established discourse of its exclusive control over defining the parameters" of action (Butler, Laclau and Zizek, 2000, p. 41). In other words, the agency of the subject is located within the possibility to disrupt the reiteration of social norms. Thus, specific forms of resignification may be subversive in how they corporeally re-enact norms that destabilise the meanings traditionally entrenched within them. Exactly what distinguishes expressions of resignification from subversive resignification is disputable. However, we might consider the example of how "queer" has been re-twisted into a politically subversive term and re-delivered to those who have articulated it as an expression of hate speech against LGBT people. In this case, the subversive resignification of the term queer openly displays its status as a re-enactment of regulative social norms, highlighting the capacity for regulative norms to backfire (Butler, 1993). Understanding the agency of the subject in terms of the capacity to alter the repetition of social norms offers insights for HRD scholars to understand how LGBT identity performances are shaped by regulative norms within various work contexts.

To illustrate, Mark, a 64-year-old transman interviewed by Connell (2010), adopted a “stealth approach at work, meaning that he did not identify himself as a transman, leaving [him] subject to the same accountability structures of doing gender that cispeople must negotiate” (p. 39). In Mark’s case, fear of discrimination motivates his decision to adopt a strategy of stealth and, over time, he learns to perform gender in an appropriately “masculine” way that allows him to pursue a successful career as a “man”. Another of Connell’s interviewees, an out transman called Kyle, sought to undermine the gendered expectations of co-workers. Kyle “made deliberate decisions to keep so-called ‘feminine’ aspects of his work style in his employment” because he felt they were central to his identity as a transman, but also because they helped Kyle to distinguish himself from other male co-workers as a male who is sensitive and communicative. Such expressions of gender may give transpeople like Kyle distinctiveness that is valued by employers within specific work contexts. As these examples illustrate, it is unwise to assume how transgender employees might desire and establish in/stability in how they reiterate the norms that constitute them as gendered subjects. Actual cases are far more complicated and contingent than we might sometimes presume, demanding that HRD scholars are acute about examining the contextual accountability to gender norms experienced by transpeople in specific workplaces.

Another insight HRD scholars can draw from Butler’s work concerns how performances of normative acts of recitation are driven by an underlying desire for recognition of oneself as a culturally intelligible, viable subject. For Butler (1993, p. 115), subjectivity in this respect is always a process of undoing through which, as she puts it, “the subject produces its coherence at the cost of its own complexity”. One issue for HRD scholars interested in developing queer analyses of LGBT identities and a politics of recognition is the “tacit cruelties...[that] sustain

coherent identity” (Butler, 1993, p. 115). To illustrate, HRD scholars might adopt diversity management discourses to articulate the salience and economic potential of human difference in the workplace (e.g. Ely & Thomas, 2001). For Bendl, Fleischmann and Walenta (2008), this managerialist conception of diversity gives rise to a pertinent question seldom asked in the diversity management literature: “what conceptions of identity underpin diversity management discourse and do these conceptions reproduce heteronormativity?” (p. 383). Deploying the deconstructive strategies associated with queer theory, Bendl et al. (2008) expose how diversity management discourse reproduces binary and heteronormative notions of identity that discursively construct employees “as having one sex, one sexuality and one gender, congruent with each other, fixed for life” (p. 388). Diversity management discourse is highly problematic in how it essentialises identity, reifies hierarchical relationships among diversity dimensions and reproduces the binary logics that sustain heteronormativity and cisnormativity in the workplace. The “tacit cruelties”, to coin Butler’s (1993) words, within diversity management discourse are those engendered by the re-enactment of social norms that compel LGBT subjects to conform to heteronormative and cisnormative expectations about how LGBT identities *should* be performatively constituted within organisations. When HRD scholars and practitioners engage with diversity management discourse, they may unwittingly flatten the sheer complexity of the lived experiences of LGBT identities in the workplace.

In summary, through a queer theory lens, HRD scholars are able to rearticulate identity as discursive, performativity constituted and subject to alteration. What is more, queer theory can provoke challenging questions about how HRD is complicit in reproducing normative regimes that fasten LGBT subjects to fixed identities. Furthermore, queer theory encourages HRD

scholars to reconsider how HRD might be understood and experienced in non-normative ways, discussed briefly below.

Implications for HRD practice

In this chapter I have sought to contribute to the theorisation of HRD research and practice through the lens of queer theory. Queering LGBT identity categories has featured prominently in this chapter, with the aim of showing HRD scholars how LGBT people can be constrained through the re-enactment of social norms that exert pressure on LGBT subjects to identify in particular ways (e.g. within binary formations). HRD may be complicit in reproducing such normative regimes, a disconcerting observation that rarely attracts scholarly attention within the HRD field. However, queer theory can function as a critical lens through which scholars can interrogate HRD's investments in maintaining its own normalising tendencies.

It is important to acknowledge that queer theory and queering are underwritten by a notion of anti-normativity, but this does not mean queering prescribes what forms non-normative alternatives should take. Instead, it encourages us to rethink what is currently and potentially possible and to reconsider the limits imposed by current social norms. This requires HRD scholars and practitioners to question the complacencies they have grown accustomed to within the field of practice. For example, it may require scholars to reconsider current HRD teaching practices that endorse a perspective of individuals as resources for enhancing organisational performance. Obscured here is the idea of developing people as socially responsible and ethical subjects, a project that has wider and longer-term social and organisational benefits (Bierema, 2009). As part of that endeavour, queering LGBT identities within the context of HRD education

has a role to play in exposing how pedagogical practices reproduce heteronormativity and cisnormativity in ways that limit LGBT people's lives and their potential contribution in and outside the workplace. A queerer HRD curricula and pedagogy can flag the "study of limits, the study of ignorance, and the study of reading practices" (Britzman, 1995, p. 155). At the same time, queering HRD as a pedagogical practice might condition notions of inclusivity that are more amenable to how LGBT identities may be lived out queerly. Additionally, the practice of queering identities in the HRD field can extend beyond those categorised as LGBT. It can, for example, expose the diversity of heterosexual identities that heteronormativity seeks to conceal in its efforts to maintain heterosexuality as coherent and stable (Thomas, 2000). Queering heterosexual identities might open up opportunities for heterosexuals to articulate the normative constraints associated with living a heterosexual identity in the workplace, and explore modes of identifying as heterosexual that are not heteronormative (Dean, 2014). On this matter and the issues outlined above, I encourage scholars and practitioners to deploy queer theory as a critical lens to unsettle the complacencies and normative assumptions that currently congeal aspects of the HRD domain, and thus hamper our efforts to foster human flourishing.

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